



From the Desk of the Director: Division (transition to) School of Postgraduate Studies (D/SPGS)

In 2014 the Council of the UWC accepted the recommendation of the Postgraduate Review Committee (PRC) to establish a School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS) at UWC. The strategic importance of the SPGS, within its global and institutional context, is validated by a recent review of higher education in South Africa, twenty years into democracy. In this review, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) draws attention to a number of developments in South Africa that have been important in building South Africa's research capacity and its ability to participate competitively within a global 'knowledge economy'. While the Review recognizes important indicators of progress, it also suggests that much still needs to be done by South African universities to contribute more substantially within this global context to the country's knowledge requirements and enhance its global competitiveness. The Review also re-affirms the arguments consistently made in South Africa's post-apartheid policy framework "...that the most successful societies in the future will be those that optimise the creation, distribution, and utilisation of knowledge or information..." (CHE, 2016: 197).

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) for 2030 addresses more directly what is required from the university sector, particularly in relation to the critical need for the country to increase its post-graduate outputs, especially at the doctoral level. In this regard, the NDP's proposals for the university sector include increasing the number of Masters and Doctoral students so that by 2030 25% of all enrolments must be at the post-graduate level. Particularly important, the NDP emphasises that the country needs to produce more than 100 doctoral graduates per million per year by 2030. This is a huge jump from the existing 28 PHD graduates per million per year; a figure the Plan emphasises is very low by international standards. It is not surprising therefore that taking this context into account, South Africa's latest White Paper for the post-school sector argues that knowledge in the country must increase if South Africa's development goals are to be achieved. Critical to this, it argues, is increasing the number of post-graduate students and post-doctoral fellows in key areas (DHET, 2013).

These contextual issues have been important to UWC's endeavours over the last fifteen years towards strategic realignment and growth through enhancing its role and functioning as a distinctly South African university, as well as through an ability to contribute at the highest levels of scholarship to the growth and development of South Africa, all within an increasingly complex and knowledge driven world. Particularly important has been UWC's strategic planning framework and commitment to enhance UWC's research and innovation capacity in critical areas vital to the country's development.

What is important to recognise, however, is that while the SPGS is seen as an important next step in the UWC growth process, the idea of a postgraduate school is also reflective of international good practice in postgraduate education. Such structures are recognised as nodal points for the organisation, delivery and quality assurance of postgraduate education. While their scope and functioning differ according to their institutional landscape, with some, for example, hosting programmes or degrees that do not fit comfortably in conventional faculties or departments, in most cases they are positioned to play a strong support role in relation to postgraduate students and to influence institutional thinking and functioning around postgraduate education.

Internationalisation and global integration, together with the standardisation of higher education terminology, have resulted in the proposed (2014) school of postgraduate studies being titled: The UWC

School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). Although a new structure at UWC, SPGS is reflective of an important milestone reached in a process of strategic intent embarked upon by the University, especially over the last fifteen years. As the next step in the process of organisational development supporting this strategic intent, the D/SPGS will take forward and expand on a number of the activities and strategies initiated through the Postgraduate Enrolment and Throughput Project (PET: 2001-2009) and the Division for Postgraduate Studies (DPGS: 2009-2016), both as the precursors to the new School of Postgraduate Studies approved by the UWC Council on 14 December 2016. Some of these strategies and activities would be our Winter & Summer Schools, Postgraduate Professional Development Courses as well as Research and Supervision Capacity Building Courses. Please do contact us to participate in these erudition opportunities.

In alignment with the University's broader strategy and Institutional Operating Plan (IOP: 2016-2020), the SPGS is contextualised relative to both the global and national issues impacting on and shaping the University's research mandate, together with the specific institutional imperatives that the School seeks to take forward. The SPGS vision is to be a *School of excellence, promoting high quality scholarship & research that provides and promotes an enriching & gratifying postgraduate experience for students and postdoctoral fellows underpinned by the principles of equality, social justice, collective action, empowerment and sustainability in contributing towards creating a better life for all.*

This will be achievable due to the growing status of UWC in the National, Regional and International arena. For example: UWC is the leading university in South Africa in the fields of Ecology, Nuclear Physics, Genetics & Heredity, Planning & Development, Multidisciplinary Sciences (Web of science citation impact for 1993-2012); UWC has 14 Centres of Excellence; we hosts three World Health Organization Collaborating Centres; two of the current Vice-Chancellors of South African universities are UWC alumni; UWC holds 7th position on the Times Higher Education's rankings of the top universities in Africa for research influence; UWC hosts fourteen SARChI Chairs and UWC is ranked in the top 5% of 2500 BRICS universities.

UWC is involved in the Erasmus Mundus Programme since 2010/2011 and I am happy to have the opportunity to be the Joint coordinator of three programmes under this umbrella: AESOP; AESOP+ and INSPIRE. In addition to this we also form this office play a coordinating role in mobilities under the Erasmus+ programme and the Capacity Building Erasmus + programmes.

We look forward to welcoming you to our institution and at our School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS) where we will join with you in collectively bringing about extraordinary change in the world within which we live. I am confident that your time with us as a national or international exchange postgraduate student, post-doctoral fellow, staff member or visiting friend will be both enjoyable and rewarding, and that you will be provided with the knowledge and experience that will hugely benefit you in your future endeavours.



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